

Achieving Procurement Diversity Using Institutions of Higher Education

DISA Actively Cultivates a Valuable, Almost Untapped Resource to Satisfy DoD IT Requirements

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In the Department of Defense procurement arena, the challenge for many agencies is how to meet the goals of competitively awarding sufficient contract dollars to Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), which includes approximately 500 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Minority Institutions (MI). Presidential Executive Order 12928, "Promoting Procurement with Small Businesses Owned and Controlled by Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Individuals, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Minority Institutions," encourages DoD and federal agencies to support contracting initiatives and efforts that include obtaining services from HBCU/MI, including Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian Institutions as well as small, disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses.

DISA and a New Kind of Contract

The Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) has developed and established an innovative approach that provides opportunities for MI and the small business community, and effectively and efficiently fulfills DoD information technology support services requirements.

Called the DISA Minority Institutions Technology Support Services (MITSS) Contract, it provides effective and efficient use of colleges and universities to sustain and advance DoD technology programs; and helps increase the par-

ticipation of MI in defense procurements. A DISA contract award to an MI increases the DoD knowledge base in the nation's colleges as well as MI involvement in DoD procurements.

The Need Is Urgent


DoD has a continuing requirement to provide high-quality, information technology-based products and services covering a wide range of programs, systems, organizations, and people to support Command, Control, Communications, Computer, and Intelligence for the Warrior (C4I²WTW). To manage its complex technical infrastructure and maintain information superiority, DoD must have access to a sustaining cadre of highly skilled resources. This challenge requires DoD to cultivate extensive partnerships with industry as well as IHE to maintain advances in technology and training.

The Defense Information Systems Agency has developed and established an innovative approach - the Minority Institutions Technology Support Services (MITSS) Contract - that provides opportunities for Minority Institutions; Historically Black Colleges and Universities; and the small, disadvantaged, and women-owned business community.

Responding to this challenge, DISA established an Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract for information technology (IT), telecommunications, and related services that ensures timely access

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to the resources of highly qualified Institutions of Higher Education, which are available to support DoD requirements upon demand. This type of contract vehicle is especially needed as DoD identifies IT support requirements, as procurement opportunities are extended to MI, and as DoD moves from the non-integrated collection of stovepipe systems and architectures to a more integrated and modern IT environment.

Military Services, and other Defense Agencies. The baseline requirement for this procurement is for HBCU/MI, with a broad range of IT services and solutions, in areas such as: computer and communications systems, networks, software development and testing, satellites, evaluating life cycle cost, technical education and training development, and satisfying end-user technical requirements.

The overall purpose of the contract is for HBCU/MI to provide a wide range of technical support, studies, and analysis and training services. This will facilitate the migration of DoD legacy information systems, networks, and standard data into an integrated and interoperable Defense Information Infrastructure. The contractor may be tasked to provide IT and a telecommunications service for activities throughout all operating levels within DoD.

A Team Effort

The Office of the Chief Information Officer Program Manager coordinated the development of the MITSS contract and organized a team of acquisition and IT professionals to assist in the planning, developing, and coordinating of this initiative, which began in fiscal 1997. The team's major accomplishments are highlighted in the timeline shown below.

Similar in form, administration, and function to the other DISA IDIQs, the DISA MITSS contract is a multiple award IDIQ Task Order-type contract with a base year and four option years. On Dec. 10, 1999, it was awarded to 11 prime contractors – eight HBCU, and three MI. The awardees include the following:

- Alabama A&M University, Normal, Ala.

- Florida International University, Miami, Fla.
- Hampton University, Hampton, Va.
- Langston University, Langston, Okla.
- New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, N.M.
- Norfolk State University, Norfolk, Va.
- North Carolina A&T State University, Greensboro, N.C.
- Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas
- Tennessee State University, Nashville, Tenn.
- University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Princess Anne, Md.
- University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, N.M.

These prime contractors carefully selected and partnered with a diverse group consisting of large IHE and businesses, and small, disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses as well as other HBCU/MI. Many of the subcontractors already have active IT-related support services contracts with DISA, or successfully completed DISA contract requirements. Figure 1 shows the total

TIMELINE FOR DEVELOPMENT/AWARD OF DISA MITSS CONTRACT

- **Request for Information (RFI) Released** – Dec. 2, 1998. Generated 18 responses from the MI community.
- **Request for Proposal (RFP) Announced** – March 2, 1999. Informed potential MIs to prepare for the eventual release of the actual RFP.
- **RFP Released** – June 22, 1999
- **RFP Closed** – Aug. 27, 1999
- **Oral Proposals Presented** – Oct. 4-15, 1999
- **Contract Award** – Dec. 10, 1999
- **Post-Award Conference** – Jan. 27-28, 2000
- **First Task Order Issued** – Feb. 16, 2000
- **Press Release** – April 6, 2000. Approved by the DISA Director and furnished to various DoD IT publications.
- **MITSS Added to the DISA DIRECT Electronic Mall** – Aug. 1, 2000.

SOW

The Statement-of-Work (SOW) outlines the technical support and services available from this multiple award procurement provided by designated HBCU/MI. This contract is available to DISA, the

representation of primes and subcontractors.

Award Amount

The MITSS contract is valued at \$24,000,000. The guaranteed minimum per year for the contract is \$1,500.

Task Areas

The contract is structured into 13 task areas, or available services that provide a wide range of technical support, studies, and analysis and training. A detailed description of each task area is contained in the SOW. The task areas are:

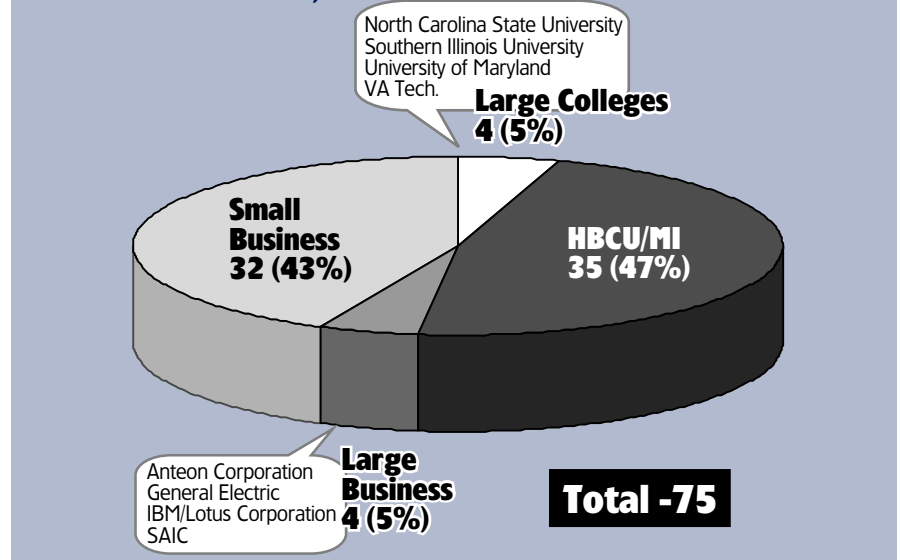
- Program and Task Order Management
- System Engineering
- Telecommunications
- Acquisition Management
- Modeling and Simulation
- Electronic Commerce
- Program and Information Management
- System Evaluation, Integration and Testing
- Information Systems Security and Information Assurance
- Software, Computer Systems, and Network Application Development
- Information Technology Training (including Distance Learning)
- Studies in Advanced Information Technologies
- Business Process Reengineering.

DoD Mentor-Protégé Program

The MITSS MI are also available to provide training and development courses for agencies that maintain a Mentor Protégé Program. Courses are tailored to the requirements of the small businesses designated as protégées. The DoD Mentor Protégé Program objective is for a successful company to mentor a small company, primarily by means of a transfer of intellectual knowledge or a transfer of technology.

DISA's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization provided funding for the initial Task Order to all 11 MITSS contractors, which required MITSS contractors to furnish a Mentor-Protégé Program Plan (MPP) and MPP Brochure, listing courses of training available for DoD designated protégées.

FIGURE 1. Business Representation (Percentage of Primes and Subcontractors)



Proposal Evaluation

MITSS contractor proposals were evaluated on the following criteria:

- **Technical Capability.** The MITSS RFP required contractors to respond to all 13 task areas stated in the SOW. Each contractor team presented an oral proposal that addressed both technical capabilities and past performance in the 13 task areas.
- **Past Performance.** Information on work performed that related specifically to the 13 task areas.
- **Labor Rates.** Contractor-furnished rates for the labor categories listed in the SOW, which included base and option years, as well as for work performed at either the contractor or government sites.

Contracting Process/Procedures

The MITSS offers a variety of contract types – Firm Fixed Price, Cost Plus Fixed Fee, and Time and Materials. MITSS allows decentralized ordering and can be used by all the Military Services and DoD Agencies. DoD customers have the option of either using their own organic contract office to perform the contracting functions, or using services of DISA's Information Technology Contracting Office (DITCO-Scott), located at Scott Air Force Base, Ill. DITCO-Scott charges a 2 percent fee to perform these contracting functions, including devel-

oping the solicitation, advertising, and awarding the task order.

Task orders have a Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act and Federal Acquisition Regulation 16.505 (b) requirement to provide fair opportunity for consideration of awards. The contracting officer will give each contractor a fair opportunity to be considered for orders in excess of \$2,500 unless one of the conditions in Federal Acquisition Regulation 16.505(b)(2) applies. Exceptions include awards for urgency, only one capable contractor, logical follow-on contract, and minimum task order guarantee.

The task order process takes approximately 28 days or less from review of the solicitation to contract award. MITSS contractors have 10-14 days to provide a proposal in response to a solicitation posted at a restricted Web site. The flow chart at Figure 2 describes the MITSS task order process.

MITSS Web Site

Interested customers can visit the MITSS Web site at <http://www.disa.mil/D4/diioss/mitsschar.html> to access the following information:

- **The MITSS Task Order Guide.** This on-line manual provides step-by-step instructions on how to develop a task

order. It has a sample Independent Government Cost Estimate worksheet. Although developed for internal DISA use, it serves as an excellent guide for developing a task order.

- **Contract/Statement of Work.** A generic copy of the MITSS Contract and Statement of Work.
- **Prime Contractors/Subcontractors.** List of the prime contractors and their subcontractors; also provides a link to the prime contractors' and the subcontractors' Web pages.
- **Labor Rates.** Contractor Labor Rates Table with Labor Categories listing rates for work that would be accomplished at either the contractor or government site.
- **MITSS Quick Reference Overview.** A list that compares the General Services Administration schedule with the MITSS for obtaining IT services.
- **Task Areas.** List of the 13 task areas that links to the description.
- **Task Order Process.** A flow chart explaining the Task Order process from review of the solicitation through award.
- **MITSS Points of Contact.** Includes the Contracting Officer, Contract Spe-

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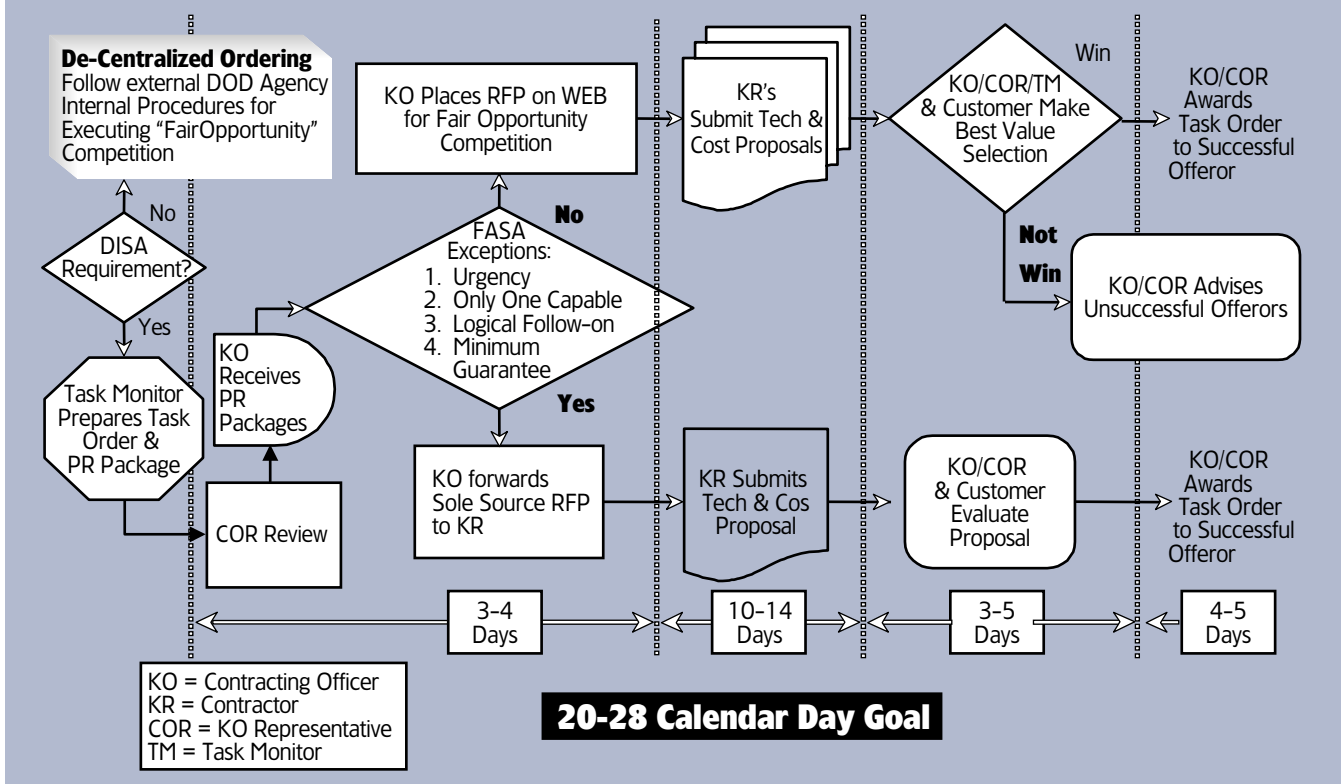
- **MITSS Press Release.** Furnished to DoD publications.
- **Awards.** Lists awards and requirements tracking.
- **Request for Proposal (RFP).** The password-protected link for MITSS prime contractors to access RFPs.

Electronic Business

The MITSS contract and task order awards are distributed to awardees electronically. Solicitations/RFPs requiring proposal response from the MITSS contractors are posted to a password-protected MITSS Web site to which only the prime contractors have access. Also, an email is sent to the contractor's points of contact when an RFP is posted to this site. MITSS prime contractors are encouraged to routinely check this site for competitive opportunities.

Monthly activity reports are emailed each month to the Contracting Officer and Contracting Officer's Representative, providing status of task orders awarded as well as contract status.

FIGURE 2. **DISA Task Order Process**



Customers can also access DISA DIRECT Electronic Mall to obtain information on the MITSS contract vehicle and the services available to meet DoD requirements.

Credit

Although the MITSS contract was established by DISA, HBCU/MI credit is attributed only to the awarding activity (i.e., Army, Navy, Air Force, or other DoD Activities) using DD Form 350, "Individual Contracting Action Report."

Comparisons/Benefits

DISA's approach to developing and implementing the MITSS contract to increase the participation of HBCU/MI in DoD procurement actions differs from approaches used by other organizations.

- The MITSS contract constitutes a set-aside for MI as prime contractors.
- Contractors compete for task order awards with only the other MITSS competitors.
- The MITSS opportunities Web site is routinely checked for solicitations posted. Also, users may request they be notified by email that a solicitation has been posted.
- Because they have a pre-approved award, contractors have immediate access to compete for other DoD contracts, including those of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. Basically, DoD interested customers need only identify their requirements, de-

velop a SOW, email/post the RFP, accept and review proposals, and ensure their contracting office awards the contract.

Obstacles to Minority Institutions

MI must compete with the entire population of large businesses and majority institutions that have an established history of past performance and a foothold on the DoD procurement business. Some of the barriers are:

- Limited DoD individual procurement opportunities for MI.
- Limited DoD set-aside opportunities.
- Potential contractors from MI must constantly identify procurement opportunities by searching DoD's many Web sites, reviewing the *Commerce Business Daily*, and various networks.

Win-Win for DoD and Minority Institutions Using the MITSS

DoD has unlimited access to the resources of IHE for the purpose of:

- Obtaining IT support and services.
- Obtaining IT training tailored to the needs and requirements of the MPP protégées. Provide training at a desired location with a class size necessary for maximum learning and retention.
- Increasing DoD partnering opportunities with IHE/MI.

- Increasing opportunities for DoD to meet or exceed the goals of competitively awarding contract dollars to MI.

An Innovative Contracting Approach

The MITSS can be described as an innovative contracting approach that DISA has implemented to offer procurement opportunities for designated MI, and as a valuable, almost untapped resource to satisfy DoD IT requirements. Awarded to 11 HBCU/MI as prime contractors, these 11 IHE have partnered with a diverse group of subcontractors that possess the capabilities and experience DoD seeks, and have successfully completed previous IT or related contracts for DoD.

The MITSS contractors are responding to Web site solicitations, competing for, and receiving task order awards. The MITSS is only one success story that, as already demonstrated, can markedly increase procurement opportunities to support America's warfighters, and enhance the economic well-being of the nation's MI as well as small, disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses. Hopefully, other DoD and federal agencies will elect to emulate and repeat the successes DISA has enjoyed through the MITSS contract vehicle.

Editor's Note: The authors welcome questions or comments on this article. Contact Elliott at ElliottB@ncr.disa.mil.

AT&L WORKFORCE RESOURCES

The following guides, handbooks, and "How To" manuals will help you step-by-step through several acquisition processes. Access them at <http://www.acq.osd.mil/ar/resources.htm>.

- *Guide to Performance Based Payments*, Jan. 22, 2001. The policy, "Use of Performance-Based Payments (PBP)," signed by Dr. Jacques Gansler on Nov. 13, 2000, explains this new, simplified financing technique.
- *Performance-Based Services Acquisition (PBSA) Guidebook*, Jan. 2, 2001.
- *Commercial Off The Shelf (COTS) and Commercial Item Guide*, "Commercial Item Acquisition: Considerations and Lessons Learned," July 2000.
- *Guide to Incentive Strategies for Defense Acquisitions*, January 2001.
- *Guide to Collection and Use of Past Performance Information*, Version 2, May 2001.
- *Intellectual Property: Navigating Through Commercial Waters*, "Issues & Solutions When Negotiating Intellectual Property With Commercial Companies," April 2001.
- *Other Transactions (OT) Guide For Prototype Projects*, January 2001.
- *Contracting for the Rest of Us: Some Basic Guidelines*, October 2000, was released by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, Acquisition and Business Management.
- *Procedure for Bid Protests at GAO* (a descriptive process).